

as to the seriousness of my transgression and the response expected from me. I still remember ironing the pages of the notebook that had gotten wet before it was found. That first evening was the beginning of the greatest learning experience of my life.

I remember so fondly the two favorite names that you called Hammy in my presence. The first was when we were looking for his approval of a manuscript or scheme, and you would refer to him as "Maestro." I feel that this was a very accurate description of his nature. He was an eminent composer, conductor and master of the art. That art was, of course, the written word, which somewhere along the line includes analytical thought as well. It is doubtful whether I or any number of gabboons would have ever written anything without Hammy's help. That help was always firm, frank, and often painful for me; but one could never say that Hammy was unkind in the process. Indeed, I can picture myself squirming in discomfort after a good "editing," and Hammy finding something so nearly absurd about my attempt at self expression that it started both of us laughing. For this, I owe Hammy much.

The other name you used for Hammy was "Gesichtelle," which literally translated means "little face." This was strictly between the two of you, but I believe it to be a term of endearment, and observed your use of it in special situations where appeasement of the "Maestro" seemed in order. Indeed, N. Tinbergen and K. Lorenz showed that this sort of behavior maintained the pair bond in many organisms. I should have learned that earlier in life.

Even as a gabboon, Hammy treated me with respect, and played the generous host beyond all expectations. We could be having a raucous writing session in the back room over a jug of MP, when Hammy could be heard, "Bill, are you in? How about you, Fran?" Usually that meant martinis for a select few before bed and the winding down of the more strenuous activities.

There are many such memories, such as the inadvertent crack left in Hammy's net door which allowed Ambrose to get into Hammy's office, the great pleasure you both took when we flew the owls indoors at night, and "mouse television." So many words added to my vocabulary: "stocking mail," "go topside," "Kombi," "George's Stomach," "do a walk-in to the nest," "Fuzz," "Cuzzin Ray" and much more.—**William C. Scharf, Biological Sciences, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588.**

THE HAMERSTROMS, A MEMOIR

It's January and time again to throw a *bal-chatri* for wintering kestrels. The birds once more are perched on the lines in the rural areas of coastal North Carolina where I now live, but with each bird I ensnare, my mind drifts back to another day and another place—and to the always delightful company of Frances and Frederick Hamerstrom.

My recollection goes back to the Christmas season of 1973, or maybe it was 1974, when a well-used—some might say ramshackle—Volkswagen bus clattered into the parking lot at the Welder Wildlife Foundation in southern Texas. The snows and bitter cold of Wisconsin were far away once more. Fran and "Hammy" had arrived.

The Hamerstroms were a legend in their own time. I'd heard of them since my student days, of course, as had just about anyone with an interest in wildlife, but now here they were in person. Fran, hair askew, in her flannel shirt and well-worn jeans scarcely resembled the debutante and fashion model she once had been. Indeed, as I got to know her better, I suspect she gleefully "played" to the contrasts of her then-and-now image. (See page 5 of Fran's marvelous book *Strictly for the Chickens* for a photo of a *verrry* fashionable young woman poised elegantly on an impressive staircase.) Hammy, dashing in his magnificent snow-white goatee and mustache, immediately transmitted an air of quiet competence, warmth, and civility for which he was widely known (*Wildl. Soc. Bull.* 19:119–122; see also 378–379).

So, here the Hamerstroms were in person, replete with what was for me an arcane collection of wire, loops, tubes, and caged birds stored rather randomly inside and on top of their much-traveled bus. Fascinating days lay ahead.

In the winters following their so-called retirement, Fran and Hammy had begun fleeing the Pleistocene-like environment of Wisconsin, trapping and banding raptors *en route* to the more compatible climes of Texas and Mexico. Harris' Hawks were their special interest while staying at Welder, before heading on to Mexico to study Ospreys, but there was always time for banding another redbill or kestrel, and certainly for discussions of Northern Harriers—Fran, I think, was one of the first to champion renaming "marsh hawks." Northern Harriers remained a special interest for Fran, although Hammy, as always, was dutifully involved with the work, whether in the field or as a reviewer of manuscripts (he was renowned for his precision with words). Fran's studies of harriers spanned some two decades and included data on more than 200 nests and almost as many color-marked breeding adults. Of the papers resulting from this volume of long-term information, one in particular stands out—for me, at least—because it clearly links the importance of prey abundance on the reproductive efforts of predators (F. Hamerstrom 1979, *Auk* 96:370–374). This work eventually led to a book-length treatment, entitled "Harrier, hawk of the marshes: the hawk that is ruled by a mouse" (1986, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC).

In Texas, the harriers and Prairie Chickens of Wisconsin were left behind in favor of Harris' Hawks. And it was

in search of these interesting birds that I learned first hand of the paraphernalia of capturing and banding raptors. *Bal-chatris* were especially captivating for me and, more importantly, for a good number of Harris' Hawks as well. My experience with such devices was nil, and so I quickly became the newest of their many "gabboons," the Hamerstoms' quaint name for apprentices. According to Fran, "gabboon" stems from Africa, where, with a slightly different spelling, the term refers to those of a wretched tribe who are forced into servitude by a more powerful tribe. During the field season in Wisconsin, the Hamerstoms often had a houseful of such volunteer laborers at hand. Tales of the cuisine served to the gabboons, while no doubt enhanced by their repeating, nonetheless stir the workings of one's gastrointestinal system. "Roadkill stew" has since become a staple in my vocabulary, but not—I think!—as an entree on those occasions when I shared a table blessed with Fran and Hammy's cooking.

So off we went one fine day, mentors and new gabboon. Down to Kingsville, then off toward Falfurrias. Harris' Hawk country. The bus clattered, but on it went under Hammy's steady control. Fran was busy boiling water for tea on some kind of stove when Hammy spotted the first bird. Out went the *bal-chatri*; Fran lowered the trap from the moving bus with the same grace as she had descended those stairs so long ago. A quick catch. The bird was quickly immobilized inside a plastic tube—so that was what they were for!—again with the effortless grace that comes with long experience. Another bird along the roadside, this one with a companion nearby. With *bal-chatri* again in place, Hammy gunned down the road, turning the bus around with his own style of creative driving that comes from years of field work on narrow roads. Success again, but this time both birds wheeled to the trap and both were soon hopelessly tangled in the nooses. I'm not sure, but I'd guess that the Harris' Hawk may be the only species in which two (or more?) birds might be captured at once in a *bal-chatri*. In any case, untangling those two unhappy birds was another event etched so deeply in my memory of days long ago.

By now the water was ready, so a tea break was declared, followed by subjecting each bird to careful measurements, some of which appeared in print (F. and F. Hamerstrom 1978, *Rapt. Res.* 12:1–14). What seemed to be an unusual molting pattern, especially in the primaries, was of special interest and a good deal of time was spent examining the wings of every Harris' Hawk caught by the Hamerstoms. They had published a paper on their method of recording molting patterns (F. and F. Hamerstrom and J. Wilde, Jr. 1971, *Inland Bird Banding News* 43:107–108), and diagrams with their most current data now were stacked in the bus in a filing system whose working were known only to Fran.

Tea finished, we searched for more birds. Fran and Hammy were sharp-eyed and could spot a perched hawk of any kind with ease. My education was advancing, albeit slowly. I was to arrange the loops, opening any that had closed and setting them upright, but most of the time I just caught my fingers. The day wore on, with a tally of a few more Harris' Hawks for our effort. My work with the nooses improved, but never really to the satisfaction of Fran, who always was able to locate a misguided loop or two. Hammy just smiled—I suspect he'd witnessed a similar scene more than a few times before. And so it went.

The Hamerstoms' ventures to Texas and Mexico strained their retirement income, or at least that's what they said, so Fran used their long drives as time for writing for profit. At some point, I don't know when, she developed an interest in children's books and drew from her own experiences as a mother for material. "Walk when the moon is full" (1975, Crossing Press, Freedom, CA) was a result of this effort. Other experiences in their eventful lives also served as the basis for delightful stories, among them "An eagle to the sky" (1970, Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA) and "Strictly for the chickens" (1980, Iowa State University Press, Ames, IA). Scientific reports, of course, continued between these and other popular writings.

Hammy's gone now, but Fran carries on. I tried to phone her recently, just to see what she was doing, but I was unable to reach her. No doubt she still watches the prairie chickens dancing in the freshening Wisconsin spring and maybe even finds the energy to search for a few harriers' nests. I hope so. But whatever the case may be, I shall retain the rich treasure of recollections of Fran and Hammy going full force. Those, indeed, were fascinating days.—**Eric G. Bolen, The Graduate School and Department of Biological Sciences, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, NC 28409.**

A KESTREL TO THE SKY

An eagle's stature, of course, is much more impressive than a kestrel's. But, as Niko Tinbergen once wrote to me, kestrels are "sweet." Being highly adaptive in their behavior, these small falcons are distributed all over the World.

I have kept, bred and raised quite a lot of falcons, including European Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) from in

or near the town of Freiburg in southwestern Germany, American Kestrels (*F. sparverius*) caught near Plainfield, Wisconsin, and their descendants.¹²

When my husband, Otto Koehler, and I arrived at the Hamerstrom farmhouse in 1960, there were already five American Kestrels waiting to be taken to Europe on board the S.S. Nieuw Amsterdam—but this would be a story of